

Question?

To Have Or To Be

TO HAVE OR TO BE?, by Erich Fromm; Harper & Row; 215 pp.

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/ Erich Fromm is a practicing psychoanalyst and the author of "The Art of Loving," "Escape from Freedom," "Beyond the Chains of Illusion," "The Heart of Man" and others. He was born in Frankfurt, Germany, and received his education in various German universities. He has taught in Germany, in Mexico, and in the United States at Bennington, Yale, Michigan State and New York University.

"To Have or To Be?" is one of the books in the World Perspective series, a program to bring to the public books in a variety of fields by the most distinguished of contemporary thinkers and world leaders. The purpose is to reveal basic new trends in modern civilizations, to interpret the creative forces at work today, and to point to the new consciousness which can contribute to a deeper understanding of the interpolation of man and the universe.

Modern men and women are troubled by vital questions. In this book Erich Fromm's thesis is that there are two modes of existence struggling for the spirit of humankind: the HAVING mode and the BEING mode. The having mode is concerned only with material possession, power, aggression and is the cause of universal evils such as envy and violence. The being mode is based on love and concentrates on the pleasure of sharing; it is productive and meaningful rather than wasteful and hateful.

It is amusing to me that Fromm in his foreword explains the use of the generic "man" and "he." He has made a special effort to avoid all "male-oriented" language. Heretofore, he has not considered the use of language in this respect important, but has now been convinced otherwise. So, he clarifies, he uses "man" in the term of reference for the species *Homo sapiens*, without differentiation of sex, in a non-sexual meaning, rather than substituting awkward-sounding words. However, so that there can be no offense, he capitalizes "Man" in order that his nonsex-differentiated use of the term is understood.

The Industrial Age ushered in the The Great Promise of Unlimited Progress — the promise of domination of nature by Man, of material abundance, of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, of personal freedom such as had never been known. What has happened? Why has this promise failed? True, there is unbelievable progress in mechanical and nuclear programs, the computer has be-

come so refined that it is a substitution for the human mind; feudal chains have been broken, supposedly assuring a new freedom. Unfortunately, the dream of being independent masters of our lives ended when we realized that we are merely cogs in the bureaucratic machine, with our thoughts, feelings, and tastes manipulated by government and industry and the mass communications media they control. The economic gap between the rich and poor nations has widened, and the very technical progress that was to create a paradise has instead created ecological dangers and the dangers of nuclear war that could put an end to all civilization.

The development of our economic system is no longer determined by the question: What is good for man? but by the question: What is good for the growth of the system? Our way of living eventually produces a sick person, and a sick person produces a sick society.

These are depressing thoughts, the harvest of a society that is consumed by the idea of "having." Fromm explains the difference between having and being in reference to our own daily living; he also explores having and being in the Old and in the New Testaments; he discusses what these concepts mean in religion, character, and society, and in his final chapter: "Features of the New Society" (the Society of Being), he gives his program for socioeconomic changes that could turn the world away from its catastrophic course. And he asks this important question: Is there a reasonable chance for the New Society? He outlines many encouraging aspects. He has supplied a brilliant analysis of the dangers Man is facing, and how his mode of life can change. The rest is up to Man.

This is a thoughtful study, thought-provoking, worth the mind-stretching effort.

